Stocked Lakes Program: Results from an Online Survey of Yukon Anglers, 2011

Prepared by:

Oliver Barker
Nathan Millar
Fish and Wildlife Branch

Yukon
Environment
Environnement

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Copies available from:

Yukon Department of Environment
Fish and Wildlife Branch, V-5A
Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6
Phone (867) 667-5721, Fax (867) 393-6263
Email: environmentyukon@gov.yk.ca

Also available online at www.env.gov.yk.ca

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Summary

For over 30 years, Yukon's Stocked Lakes Program has provided anglers with easily-accessible fishing opportunities near communities. Environment Yukon stocks pothole lakes with rainbow trout, kokanee, Arctic char, and bull trout, with the aim of providing positive fishing experiences, and opportunities to catch fish species that might not otherwise be available. The Stocked Lakes Program also directs some harvest pressure away from wild fish stocks, such as lake trout.

In 2011, Environment Yukon carried out an online survey on the Stocked Lakes Program, to determine how people used stocked lakes, what their experiences were there, what they enjoyed about the program, and what changes they would like to see.

Key Findings

The survey had 81 respondents. Their responses showed that:

- Most respondents lived in Whitehorse, though almost all Yukon communities were represented;
- The number of trips to each lake varied enormously, from 128 trips reported for the Hidden Lakes, to four trips reported for Hour Lake;
- Respondents were willing to travel long distances to fish at stocked lakes;
- Many respondents wanted to catch more fish and larger fish;
- Some respondents wanted better signage and access to lakes;
- Many respondents wanted to see more lakes stocked;
- Many respondents wanted more information on stocking numbers and fishing methods in stocked lakes;
- Rainbow trout were the most popular fish in stocked lakes, followed by Arctic char, then kokanee; and
- Reported fishing success varied greatly among lakes.

Introduction

Yukon's Stocked Lakes Program provides anglers with fishing opportunities with easy access from most communities. The Stocked Lakes Program also diverts some harvest pressure away from slow-growing wild fishes such as lake trout. The Stocked Lakes Program has been operating for more than 30 years, and has provided thousands of anglers with opportunities to catch rainbow trout, kokanee, Arctic char, and bull trout. Currently, there are 22 stocked lakes (Figure 1.)

One of the main goals of the Stocked Lakes Program is to provide positive angling experiences for people visiting these lakes. A better understanding of people's experiences at Yukon's stocked lakes, derived from questions to stocked lakes users themselves, can provide the basis for tailoring management of the Stocked Lakes Program to provide positive angling experiences.

In late summer 2011, Environment Yukon carried out an online survey regarding the Stocked Lakes Program (Appendix I). The survey asked questions regarding peoples' experience at Yukon's stocked lakes. The purpose of the survey was to learn more about how people use Yukon's stocked lakes; which lakes they visit, how long they spend there, which fish they target, and which fish they catch. We also asked respondents which aspects of the Stocked Lakes Program they enjoyed, and what changes they would suggest for improving their experience of the program.

The survey ran from 26 July to 31 August, 2011 and was advertised in print (Yukon News, Whitehorse Star, What's Up Yukon), on radio (CHON, CKRW, CBC interview), on posters at stocked lakes and within Whitehorse and the communities, on the Environment Yukon website, and through email distribution lists and social media (Yukon Fish and Game Association email list, Yukon Enviro Network, Fish On Yukon forum, Wilderness Tourism Association Yukon enews, YG Twitter feed, Hooked on Yukon Fishing Facebook page). A total of 81 individuals responded to the survey.

Whitehorse Area

1. Hidden Lakes
2. Chadden Lake
3. Long Lake
4. Scout Lake
5. Judas Lake
6. Marcella Lake
7. Salmo Lake
8. Cantlie Lake

Watson Lake Area

9. Hour Lake
10. Rantin Lake
11. Lucky Lake
12. Veronica Lake

Carmacks Area

13. Gloria Lake I
14. Gloria Lake II

Mayo Area

15. Haldane Lake

Beaver Creek Area

16. Upper Timothy Lake
17. Lower Timothy Lake

Faro Area

18. Fisheye Lake

Ross River Area

19. Whiskers Lake
20. Coffee Lake

Stewart Crossing

21. Wrong Lake

Teslin Area

22. Haircut Lake

Figure 1. Location of Yukon stocked lakes.

Results and Discussion

1. Where do stocked lake anglers live?

Of the 81 respondents to the survey, 72 reported that they had fished in Yukon's stocked lakes before. Of these anglers, the majority reported living in Whitehorse and surrounding area.

Table 1. Place of residence of stocked lakes anglers.

Community	Number of Responses
Whitehorse area	55
Carcross	1
Dawson City	2
Faro	2
Haines Junction	1
Mayo	1
Ross River	2
Teslin	1
Watson Lake	2
Tagish	1
USA	1
Total	**72**

2. How many trips do anglers take to each lake?

The number of trips taken to each lake varied greatly. The Hidden Lakes in Whitehorse were the most popular, with 128 trips per year reported. Hour, Lucky, and Haldane lakes had the fewest number of reported trips, with 4, 5, and 5 trips per year each, respectively.

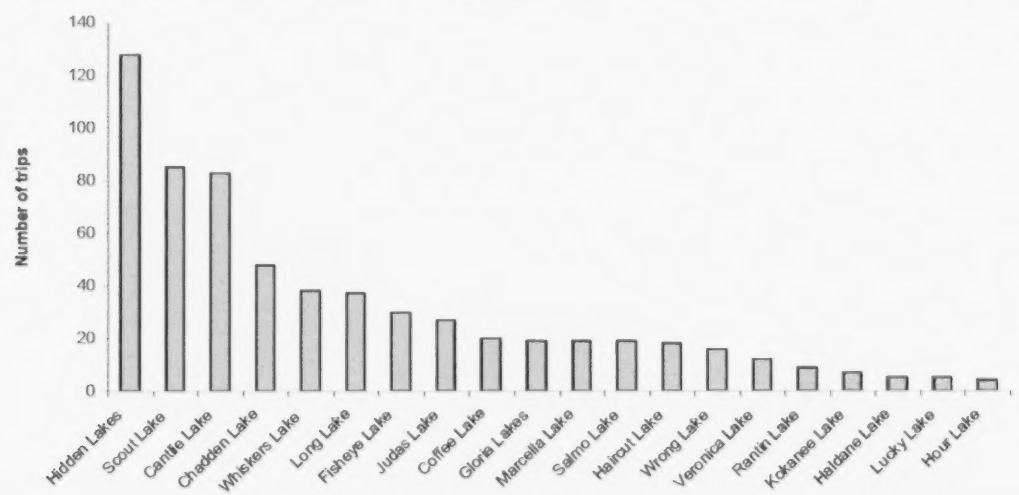

Figure 2. Total number of trips per year by survey respondents to stocked lakes.

3. How far do anglers travel on stocked lake fishing trips?

Assuming that all anglers travelled directly from their home to the lake, anglers travelled a total of 85,648 km per year on trips to stocked lakes. The total distance travelled to each lake varied, according to how far anglers travelled to it, and how many trips were made. Some, like the Hidden Lakes, involved many short trips, whereas others, like Fisheye and Wrong lakes, involved fewer trips but longer distances. The average round-trip distance of a trip to a stocked lake was 136 km.

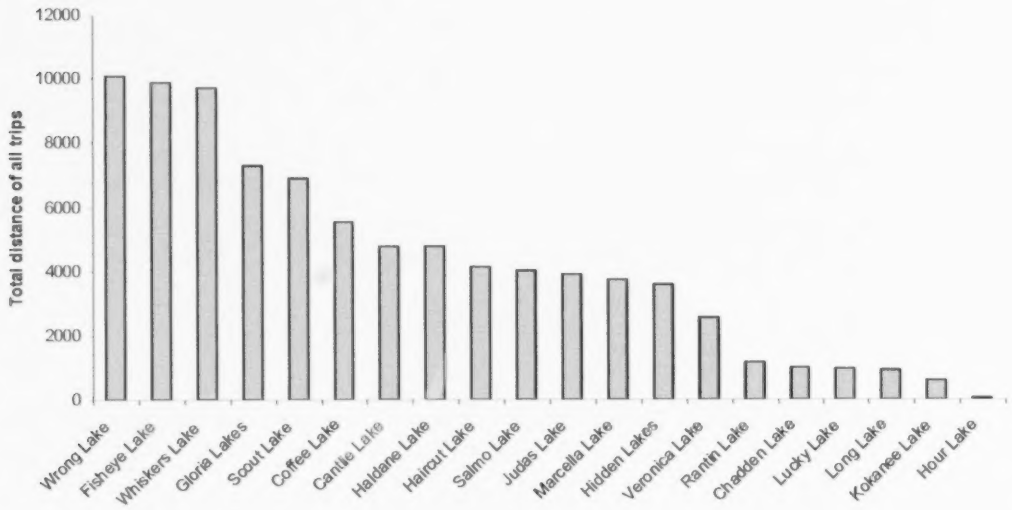

Figure 3. Total distance per year travelled by survey respondents on trips to stocked lakes.

4. How long are anglers' trips to stocked lakes?

Most anglers' trips lasted 2–4 hours or 4–6 hours.

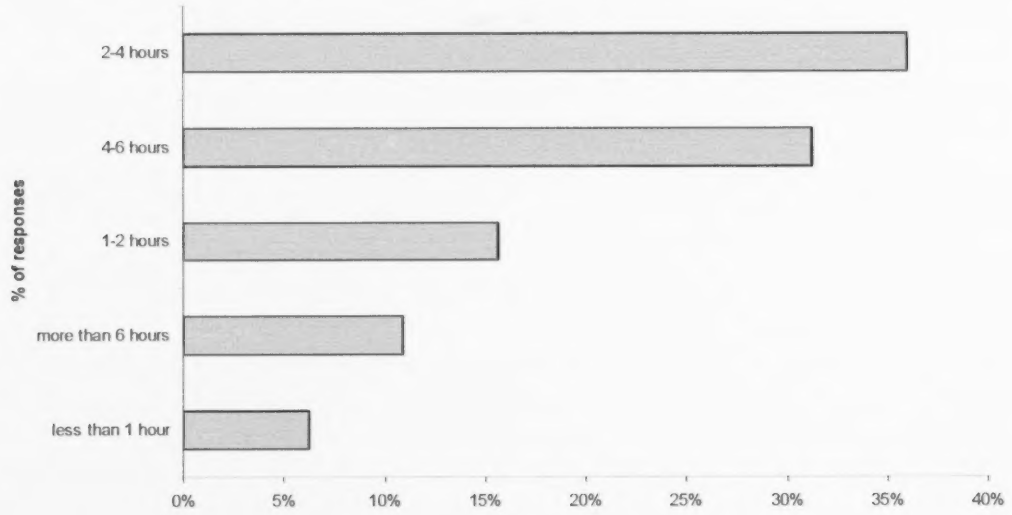

Figure 4. Duration of fishing trips by survey respondents.

5. How often do anglers ice fish on stocked lakes?

More than half of survey respondents (57%) spend time ice fishing on stocked lakes.

Of those survey respondents that ice fished on stocked lakes, most spent 3–5 days per year ice fishing.

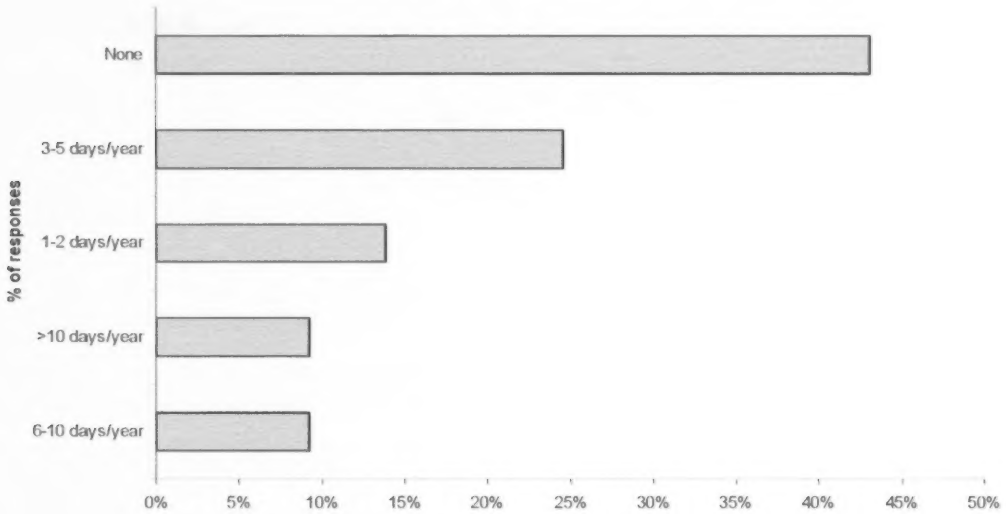

Figure 5. Number of ice fishing trips to stocked lakes per year by survey respondents.

6. What improvements would anglers like to see at stocked lakes?

Most survey respondents agreed that opportunity to catch larger fish would improve their stocked lakes experience.

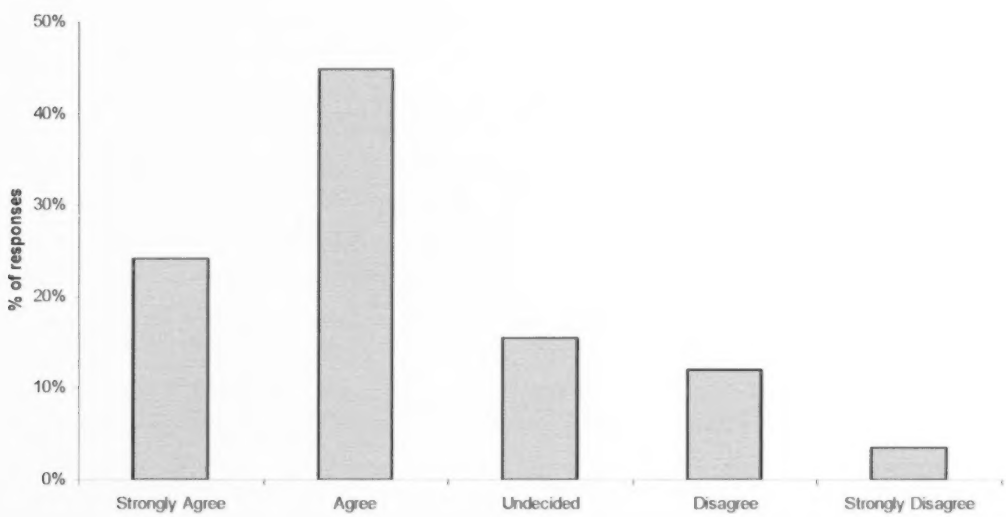

Figure 6. Responses to the statement "Opportunity to catch larger fish would have the biggest impact on your use and enjoyment of Yukon's stocked lakes."

Most survey respondents agreed that the opportunity to catch many fish would improve their stocked lakes experience.

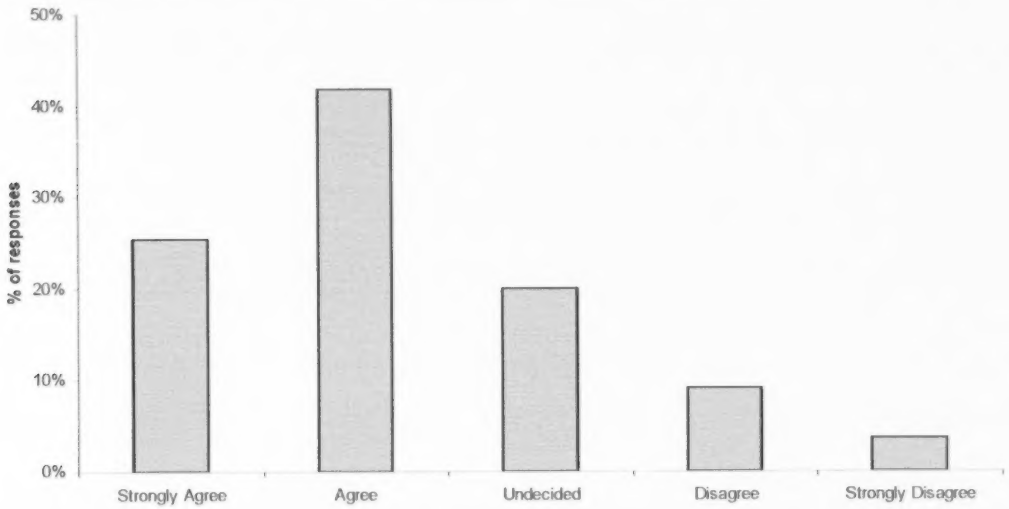

Figure 7. Responses to the statement "Opportunity to catch many fish would have the biggest impact on your use and enjoyment of Yukon's stocked lakes."

Opinion on improved access to stocked lakes was split. Some survey respondents agreed that better access would improve their stocked lakes experience, while an equal number disagreed. Many respondents were undecided.

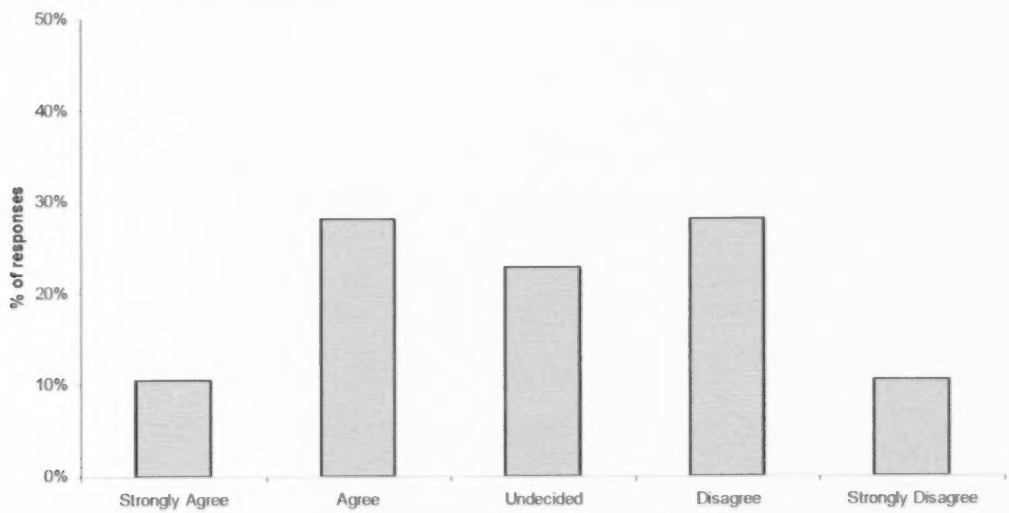

Figure 8. Responses to the statement "Improved access to stocked lakes (e.g. better trails) would have the biggest impact on your use and enjoyment of Yukon's stocked lakes."

Many survey respondents agreed that better signage and directions to stocked lakes would improve their stocked lakes experience. A great

number of respondents were undecided, however, and 33% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

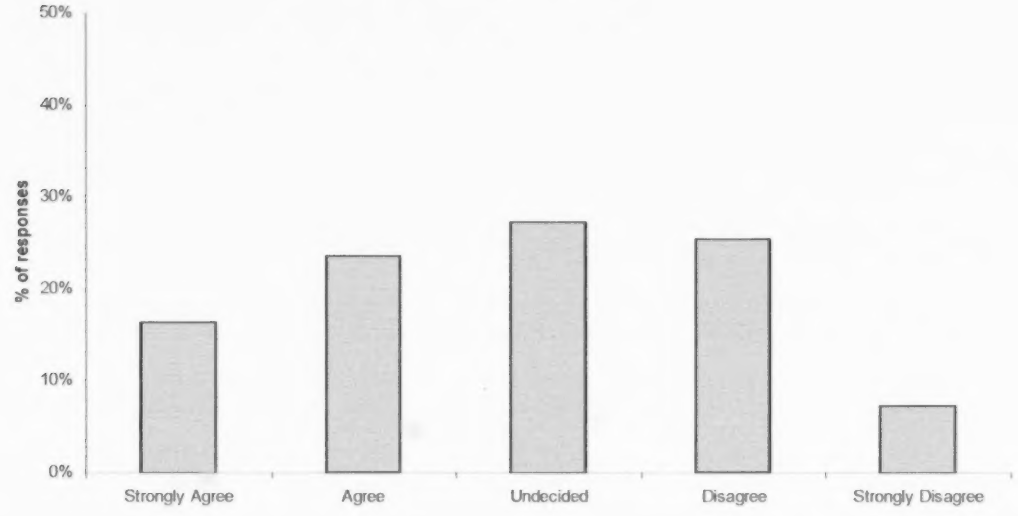

Figure 9. Responses to the statement "Better signage and directions to stocked lakes would have the biggest impact on your use and enjoyment of Yukon's stocked lakes."

Most survey respondents agreed that stocking of more pothole lakes closer to where they live would improve their stocked lakes experience. Very few respondents disagreed.

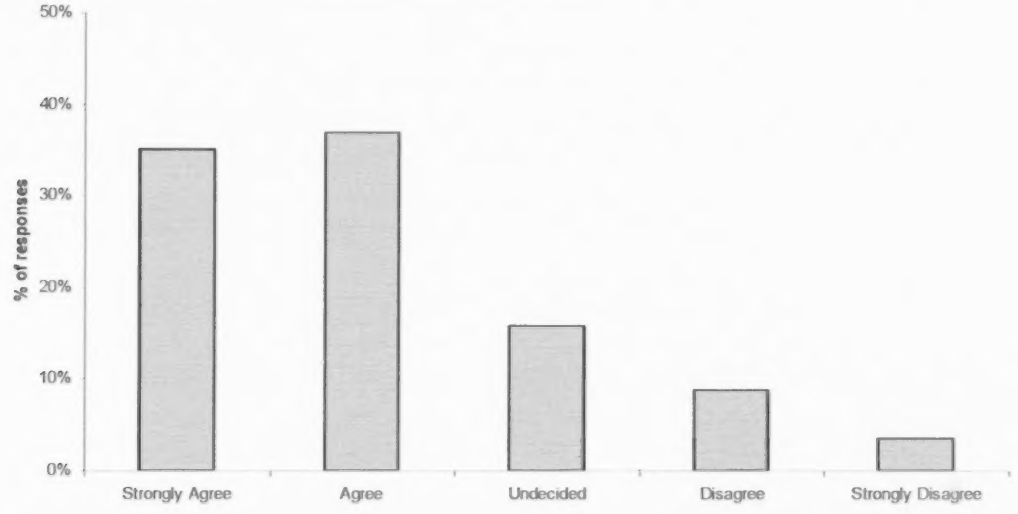

Figure 10. Responses to the statement "Stocking of more pothole lakes close to where you live would have the biggest impact on your use and enjoyment of Yukon's stocked lakes."

Many survey respondents agreed that better information on stocked lake fishing methods would improve their stocked lakes experience.

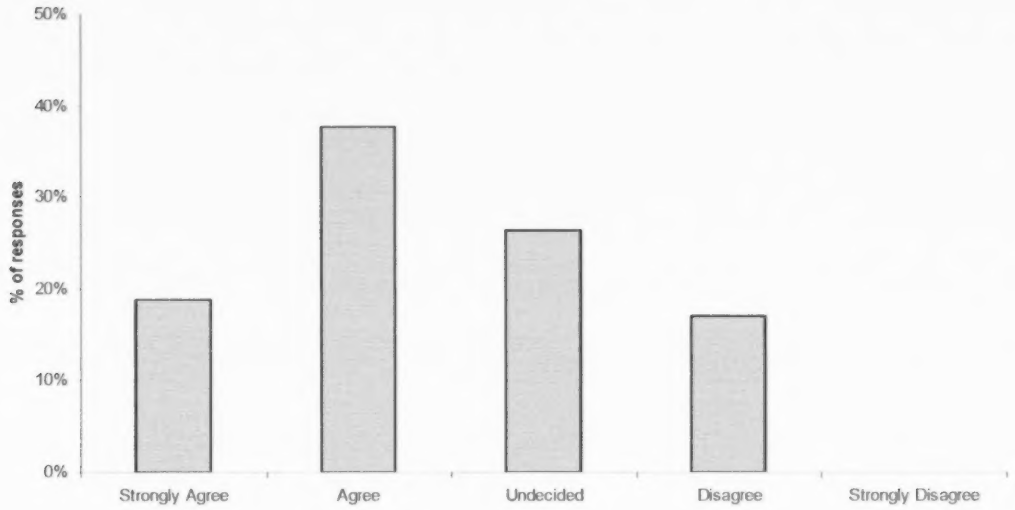

Figure 11. Responses to the statement "Better information about fishing methods in stocked lakes would have the biggest impact on your use and enjoyment of Yukon's stocked lakes."

The majority of survey respondents agreed that better information about the number and type of fish stocked would improve their stocked lakes experience. Almost no respondents disagreed.

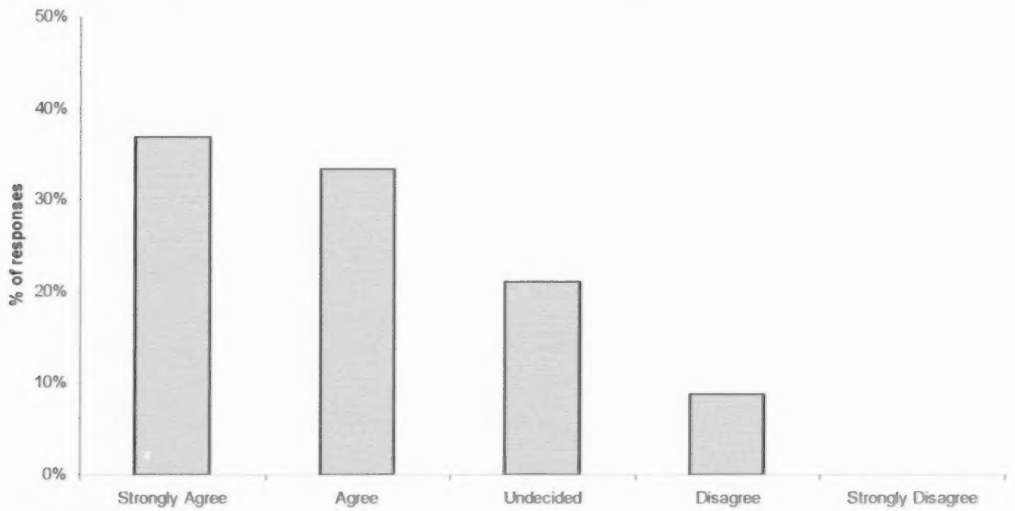

Figure 12. Responses to the statement "Better information about how many and what kind of fish are stocked in each lake would have the biggest impact on my use and enjoyment of Yukon's stocked lakes."

7. What fish species do anglers prefer fishing for?

Most survey respondents chose rainbow trout as their first choice, followed closely by Arctic char. Arctic char was the most frequent second

choice, followed closely by kokanee. Kokanee were the most common third choice.

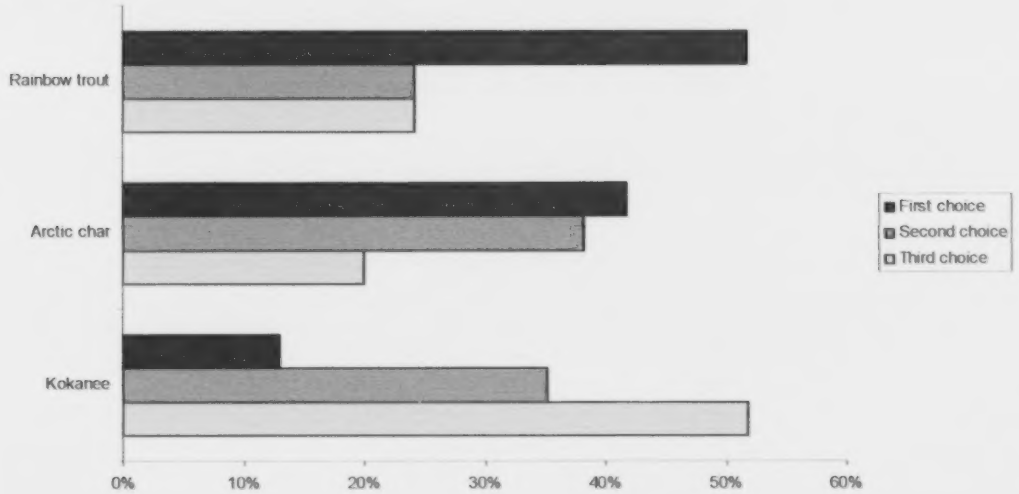

Figure 13. Survey respondents' ranking of rainbow trout, Arctic char and kokanee as first, second or third choices of fish species they prefer fishing for.

8. How is the fishing at each lake?

The fishing success reported by survey respondents varied from lake to lake and species to species. For rainbow trout, the highest-rated lakes were Haircut, Marcella, and Whiskers; most of the ratings for each of these lakes were "Excellent" and "Good". The lowest reported success was for rainbow trout in Wrong Lake, Rantin Lake, and Hidden Lake 3; these lakes received only "Fair" and "Poor" success ratings.

Table 2. Number of responses rating rainbow trout fishing success as "Excellent", "Good", "Fair" and "Poor" at Yukon's stocked lakes.

	Rating			
Lake	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**
Chadden Lake	0	3	3	4
Fisheye Lake	1	2	3	1
Gloria Lake II	3	1	2	1
Haircut Lake	1	2	1	0
Hidden Lake 1	2	2	6	7
Hidden Lake 3	0	0	5	5
Hour Lake	0	0	1	0
Judas Lake	0	2	2	2
Lucky Lake	0	0	1	0
Marcella Lake	2	0	1	0
Rantin Lake	0	0	0	2
Salmo Lake	1	3	1	4
Scout Lake	3	2	6	9
Whiskers Lake	0	3	0	1
Wrong Lake	0	0	1	4

Reported success fishing for kokanee also varied; success ratings for kokanee in Fisheye Lake were mostly "Excellent" and "Good", while ratings for kokanee fishing in Coffee Lake were mostly "Fair" and "Poor".

Table 3. Number of responses rating kokanee fishing success as "Excellent", "Good", "Fair" and "Poor" at Yukon's stocked lakes.

	Rating			
Lake	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**
Coffee Lake	1	0	2	1
Fisheye Lake	1	3	0	1
Hidden Lake 1	1	2	2	1
Kokanee Lake	0	0	2	2
Scout Lake	1	1	2	3

Fishing success for Arctic char in Cantlie Lake was rated very highly; 88% of respondents reported "Excellent" or "Good" success there.

Table 4. Number of responses rating Arctic char fishing success as "Excellent", "Good", "Fair" and "Poor" at Yukon's stocked lakes.

	Rating			
Lake	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**
Cantlie Lake	14	8	3	0
Whiskers Lake	1	1	1	2

Fishing success for bull trout in Long Lake, the only stocked lake where they are present, was rated "Poor".

Table 5. Number of responses rating bull trout fishing success as "Excellent", "Good", "Fair" and "Poor" at Long Lake.

	Rating			
Lake	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**
Long Lake	0	0	0	3

9. What do people fish for at each lake?

When fishing in lakes stocked with both rainbow trout and kokanee (Fisheye, Hidden 1, Hour, Lucky, Scout), survey respondents showed two different patterns. In Fisheye, Hour, and Lucky lakes, respondents reported that they spent roughly even amounts of time targeting rainbow trout and kokanee. In Hidden 1 and Scout lakes, however, respondents spent most of their time targeting rainbow trout, with only 32% of respondents reporting they targeted kokanee in Hidden Lake 1, and 35% of respondents reporting they targeted kokanee in Scout Lake.

In the two lakes stocked with both rainbow trout and Arctic char (Hidden 3 and Whiskers), fishing patterns also differed. In Whiskers Lake, respondents reported targeting both rainbow trout and Arctic char with equal intensity. In Hidden Lake 3, however, most anglers targeted only rainbow trout, with only one respondent out of twelve (8%) reporting that they targeted Arctic char in addition to rainbow trout.

In 10% of cases, respondents reported spending time fishing for species that did not exist in the lakes they were fishing.

10. Which anglers report the highest success?

Of the survey respondents who angled for rainbow trout, those who reported the highest level of fishing success were those respondents that reported spending longer periods of time fishing, had the most fishing trips per year, and spent the most time ice fishing each year. For instance, anglers reporting "Poor" fishing success for rainbow trout made an average of 7.5 trips to stocked lakes each year, spent an average of 2.8 hours fishing on each trip, and averaged 2.3 ice fishing trips to stocked lakes each year. Compare this to anglers who reported "Excellent" fishing success for rainbow trout; they made an average of 15 stocked lakes fishing trips per year, spent an average of 4.3 hours fishing on each trip, and averaged 6.2 ice fishing trips to stocked lakes each year. Number of trips per year, duration of trips, and number of ice fishing trips per year were all significantly linked to reported fishing success for rainbow trout.

We cannot tell if anglers who caught more fish did so because they spent a great deal of time fishing, or whether they spent a great deal of time fishing because they had good fishing success.

11. Open-ended responses: Lake-specific comments

Several respondents commented on how much they enjoyed fishing with children at stocked lakes, and what a relaxing atmosphere the lakes provided.

A number of respondents expressed frustration at not being able to catch fish, despite being able to see fish in the lake.

Several respondents requested that some lakes be set aside for the creation of "trophy" rainbow trout lakes. They suggested that one or two lakes be stocked with larger strains of rainbow trout, and that minimum size limits be put in place to ensure rainbow trout reached large size before harvest.

Several respondents commented that they would prefer not to have kokanee in lakes where they target rainbow trout, as kokanee were too easy to catch and served as a distraction from angling for rainbow trout. Some respondents favoured creating kokanee-only lakes.

There were a number of suggestions that walleye be added to the Stocked Lakes Program. Walleye, however, are not native to Yukon, and are not eligible for introduction to Yukon lakes.

A number of respondents requested that Arctic char and bull trout be stocked in more lakes. Because of difficulties in producing bull trout fry for stocking, this species is not likely to be stocked again. Arctic char, however, are a candidate for continued stocking.

12. Open-ended responses: What would improve your stocked lakes fishing experience?

Many respondents wanted opportunities to catch larger fish in some lakes. Some suggested implementing regulations to increase fish size (e.g. minimum size limits or catch-and-release only), whereas others suggested stocking more remote lakes where fishing pressure would be lower.

Responses were split when it came to lake access. Some respondents wished for better trails and access to the water, whereas others were concerned about trail proliferation and habitat destruction caused by off-road vehicle use.

Several respondents requested better signage for stocked lakes, noting that it would be especially helpful for new anglers.

Several respondents expressed concern about litter at stocked lakes, and requested better education on environmental stewardship.

A number of respondents made suggestions for improving opportunities for fishing from shore (by adding floating docks, removing submerged logs, improving trails down to the water or clearing vegetation to allow fly-fishing from shore).

Next Steps

Angler feedback is critical to our management of the Stocked Lakes Program; the responses from this survey will form the basis for our understanding of anglers' experience of Yukon's stocked lakes. We will incorporate these findings into our Stocked Lakes Program Plan and use them to continue to provide quality angling opportunities at Yukon's stocked lakes.

Appendix I: Survey on Yukon's Stocked Lakes Program

Survey on Yukon's Stocked Lakes Program

1. A little bit about you

Have you fished in Yukon's stocked lakes?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Where do you live?

- [ ] Yukon
- [ ] Canada (outside Yukon)
- [ ] Alaska
- [ ] USA (outside Alaska)
- [ ] Outside North America

Survey on Yukon's Stocked Lakes Program

2. A little bit about you

Where do you live in Yukon?

- ◯ Whitehorse and surrounding area
- ◯ Beaver Creek
- ◯ Burwash Landing
- ◯ Carcross
- ◯ Carmacks
- ◯ Dawson City
- ◯ Faro
- ◯ Haines Junction
- ◯ Johnson's Crossing
- ◯ Mayo
- ◯ Pelly Crossing
- ◯ Ross River
- ◯ Stewart Crossing
- ◯ Teslin
- ◯ Watson Lake

Other (please specify)

Survey on Yukon's Stocked Lakes Program

3. Which lakes do you fish?

The Stocked Lakes Program includes more than twenty lakes across Yukon, stocked with rainbow trout, kokanee, Arctic char and bull trout.

We'd like to hear which lakes you fish at, and how much time you spend fishing there.

Can't remember the name of the lake you fish? Click here to check our Angler's Guide to Stocked Lakes booklet and see which lakes you fish.

Which stocked lakes do you fish? Please mark the number of days, on average, you fish at each lake.

	1-2 days/year	3-5 days/year	6-10 days/year	>10 days/year
Cantlie Lake	○	○	○	○
Chadden Lake	○	○	○	○
Coffee Lake	○	○	○	○
Fisheye Lake	○	○	○	○
Gloria Lakes	○	○	○	○
Haircut Lake	○	○	○	○
Haldane Lake	○	○	○	○
Hidden Lakes	○	○	○	○
Hour Lake	○	○	○	○
Judas Lake	○	○	○	○
Kokanee Lake	○	○	○	○
Long Lake	○	○	○	○
Lucky Lake	○	○	○	○
Marcella Lake	○	○	○	○
Rantin Lake	○	○	○	○
Salmo Lake	○	○	○	○
Scout Lake	○	○	○	○
Timothy Lakes	○	○	○	○
Veronica Lake	○	○	○	○
Whiskers Lake	○	○	○	○
Wrong Lake	○	○	○	○

4. Your fishing trips

How long, on average, do your fishing trips to stocked lakes last?

- ◯ Less than one hour
- ◯ 1-2 hours
- ◯ 2-4 hours
- ◯ 4-6 hours
- ◯ more than 6 hours

How many days each year do you spend icefishing on stocked lakes?

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1-2 days/year
- ◯ 3-5 days/year
- ◯ 6-10 days/year
- ◯ >10 days/year

Survey on Yukon's Stocked Lakes Program

5. Your fishing effort

Of the stocked lakes you fish, please choose how much of your time you spend fishing for each fish species (up to a maximum of four lakes).

Each fish species may not be available in each lake, you can leave blanks for fish that aren't present in a lake.

Choose your first lake from the drop-down menu.

Lake

When I fish here, I spend ___ of my time fishing for these species.

	All of my time	Most of my time	Some of my time	None of my time
Rainbow trout	○	○	○	○
Kokanee	○	○	○	○
Arctic char	○	○	○	○
Bull trout	○	○	○	○

Choose your second lake (if applicable) from the drop-down menu.

Lake

Survey on Yukon's Stocked Lakes Program

When I fish here, I spend ___ of my time fishing for these species.

	All of my time	Most of my time	Some of my time	None of my time
Rainbow trout	○	○	○	○
Kokanee	○	○	○	○
Arctic char	○	○	○	○
Bull trout	○	○	○	○

Choose your third lake (if applicable) from the drop-down menu.

Lake [ ]

When I fish here, I spend ___ of my time fishing for these species.

	All of my time	Most of my time	Some of my time	None of my time
Rainbow trout	○	○	○	○
Kokanee	○	○	○	○
Arctic char	○	○	○	○
Bull trout	○	○	○	○

Choose your fourth lake (if applicable) from the drop-down menu.

Lake [ ]

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When I fish here, I spend ____ of my time fishing for these species.

	All of my time	Most of my time	Some of my time	None of my time
Rainbow trout	○	○	○	○
Kokanee	○	○	○	○
Arctic char	○	○	○	○
Bull trout	○	○	○	○

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6. Your catch

Of the stocked lakes you fish, please rate your fishing success for each fish species (up to a maximum of four lakes).

Each fish species may not be available in each lake, you can leave blanks for fish that aren't present in a lake.

Choose your first lake from the drop-down menu.

Lake

When I fish here, I have ___ success fishing for these species.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Rainbow trout	○	○	○	○
Kokanee	○	○	○	○
Arctic char	○	○	○	○
Bull trout	○	○	○	○

Choose your second lake (if applicable) from the drop-down menu.

Lake

When I fish here, I have ___ success fishing for these species.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Rainbow trout	○	○	○	○
Kokanee	○	○	○	○
Arctic char	○	○	○	○
Bull trout	○	○	○	○

Choose your third lake (if applicable) from the drop-down menu.

Lake

When I fish here, I have ___ success fishing for these species.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Rainbow trout	○	○	○	○
Kokanee	○	○	○	○
Arctic char	○	○	○	○
Bull trout	○	○	○	○

Choose your fourth lake (if applicable) from the drop-down menu.

Lake

When I fish here, I have ___ success fishing for these species.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Rainbow trout	○	○	○	○
Kokanee	○	○	○	○
Arctic char	○	○	○	○
Bull trout	○	○	○	○

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7. Your catch

Would you rather fish for rainbow trout, kokanee or Arctic char? Please mark your first, second and third choices.

	First choice	Second choice	Third choice
Rainbow trout	○	○	○
Kokanee	○	○	○
Arctic char	○	○	○

Do you have any lake-specific preferences or comments on species you would like to fish for?

8. How can we improve your fishing experience?

What changes to the Stocked Lakes Program would make the biggest difference in your use and enjoyment of stocked lakes in Yukon?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
More opportunity to catch larger fish	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
More opportunity to catch many fish	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Better access to stocked lakes (e.g. better trails)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Better signage and directions to stocked lakes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Stocking of more pothole lakes close to where you live	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Better information about fishing methods in stocked lakes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Better information about how many and what kind of fish are stocked in each lake	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

What other changes to the Stocked Lakes Program would improve your fishing experience at Yukon's stocked lakes?

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9. What brought you here?

How did you hear about this survey?

- ◯ Newspaper
- ◯ Radio
- ◯ Poster
- ◯ Environment Yukon website
- ◯ Word of mouth
- ◯ Other (please specify below)

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10. Thank you for your input!

Thank you for completing our survey! If you have any questions or comments about the Stocked Lakes Program, or other fisheries issues in Yukon, we would love to hear from you.

Fisheries Section
Fish and Wildlife Branch, Environment Yukon
Phone: (867) 667-5199
Email: fisheries@gov.yk.ca

What did we find? The results of this survey will be made available on the Environment Yukon website in fall 2011.
Go to Fishing : Stocked Lakes to view the results
http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/fishing/stockedlakes.php